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Torture as normal work: The Bush Administration, the Central Intelligence Agency and 'Enhanced Interrogation Techniques'

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Abstract

During the War on Terror, the Bush Administration authorized the US Central Intelligence Agency to employ 'enhanced interrogation techniques' to extract intelligence from alleged terrorists. Many organizations contended that 'enhanced interrogation techniques' were torture. Given that torture is morally reprehensible, the policy was constantly contested. This article argues that the Bush Administration attempted to legitimate the use of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' by making torture normal work. The Bush Administration did so by designating torture as legal, thus using a formal system of power that is publicly respected to validate and normalize their actions. Furthermore, by embedding torture in mundane organizational practices and rationalities, 'enhanced interrogation' was made to appear to be as ordinary as any other federal program. Hence, the article demonstrates how the legal system, as well as commonplace aspects of organizations can be employed by political elites to attempt to manage controversy around extreme policies by making them appear normal. However, a discourse of normality did not necessarily remove the taint from torture or create the results the political elites desired.

Keywords

Bush Administration, Central Intelligence Agency, enhanced interrogation techniques, extreme work, normalization, torture

Several authors have contended that extreme or unusual contexts may reveal aspects of organizational authority and power that remain hidden in more conventional settings (Bamberger and Pratt, 2010; Clegg, 2009; Rehn, 2008). Taking up this call, recent studies of genocide have shed light on

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how obedience is constructed in normal organizations, how ordinary institutional acts can further oppression and resistance, and how there are similarities between genocidal actions and the experiences of everyday life in organizations that are downsizing or re-engineering (Marti and Fernandez, 2013; Pina e Cunha et al., 2010; Stokes and Gabriel, 2010). In addition, according to Clegg (2006), organizational studies has been surprisingly silent on the apparatuses governments have created to justify morally and ethically questionable public policy, and Marti and Fernandez (2013) suggest that a promising research agenda would be to examine how such policies are legitimated through formal structures of power that are publicly respected, such as the law. This article uses an extreme context to demonstrate how governments can use the law and taken for granted aspects of organizations to attempt to minimize political and legal interference with dubious policies. It does so by examining the procedures employed by the Bush Administration to render torture as normal work.

On 11 September 2001, al Qaeda terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon, killing close to 3000 people. Six days later, President Bush signed a Memorandum of Notification giving the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) the authority to capture and detain al Qaeda operatives (Gellman, 2001; Mayer, 2009; Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2014; Siems, 2011). In response to this Memorandum of Notification, the CIA set up an 'extraordinary rendition' program to secretly apprehend supposed al Qaeda agents and render them to countries known for torturing prisoners, such as Egypt or Morocco, or to US controlled black sites where euphemistically termed 'enhanced interrogation techniques' were used (Danner, 2009; Mayer, 2009; Siems, 2011). 'Enhanced interrogation techniques' included tactics such as attention grasp, walling, facial hold, facial slap, cramped confinement, wall standing, stress positions, sleep deprivation, insects placed in a confinement box, and waterboarding (Bybee, 2002b: 2).[1]

Many organizations contended that 'enhanced interrogation techniques' were torture (Amnesty International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2011; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2007; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2013; Physicians for Human Rights, 2008). Given that most human beings are appalled and repulsed by torture, the use of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' was surrounded by controversy. For example, public opinion polls taken between 2001 and 2009 consistently showed that the US population was opposed to torture (Gronke and Rejali, 2010). Furthermore, several human rights groups have compiled a 2500-page criminal complaint against Bush for violating the Convention Against Torture which they plan to file with the courts if Bush ever travels outside of the United States (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2011; Dwyer, 2011; MacAskill and Hirsch, 2011).

Previous research has documented ways in which corporations legitimate contested authority, such as myth, rationalistic discourses, or ethical frameworks that privilege market values to the exclusion of all others (Harvie and Milburn, 2010; Rippin and Fleming, 2006; Vaara and Tienari, 2002). Other research has demonstrated that a potentially dangerous phenomenon can be rendered trivial through effective social management that highlights the normalcy and downplays the risks (Henkel, 2013). This article shows that governments can try to minimize political and legal interference with controversial policies by managing perceptions in such a way that extreme work looks normal.

While criminal behavior in the conduct of war has been pervasive throughout the ages, previous US administrations obfuscated and denied such offenses (Blum, 1995; Jamieson and McEvoy, 2005; Johnson, 2004; Turse, 2013). However, in a significant departure from the past, Bush (2006) admitted in a speech given on 6 September 2006 that the CIA had used an 'alternative set of procedures' (p. 2) to question detainees. Jackson (2007) demonstrated how the official public discourse of the Bush Administration created the logic that made torture thinkable and doable. This article contends that Bush (2006) could admit publicly that his administration authorized 'tough' methods for interrogation because torture was made to conform to the law, rather than violate it,

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and was administered through mundane organizational procedures endemic to other federal agencies (p. 2). In other words, the Bush Administration attempted to render torture as uncontentious by trying to create the appearance that it was as ordinary as any other government activity.

The article is organized as follows. First, the article briefly discusses how and why the Bush Administration turned to torture as a means for extracting intelligence in the War on Terror. Second, the Nazi Holocaust and the Vietnam War are used to theorize how organizational processes and rationalities have contributed to the normalization of atrocities from a historical perspective. Third, the article shows how the Bush Administration removed the taint from 'enhanced interrogation techniques', and transformed dirty work into clean work by attributing benign intent to the procedures. Finally, the article demonstrates how torture was given the appearance of normal work by making 'enhanced interrogation techniques' legal, and by administering them through bland organizational processes.

Setting the stage for torture

On 16 September 2001, Vice President Dick Cheney set the tone for the War on Terror when he appeared on Meet the Press and replied to a question regarding the United States' response to Osama bin Laden as follows:

> We also have to work, through, sort of the dark side, if you will. We've got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we're going to be successful. That's the world these folks operate in, and so it's going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective. (NBC News Meet the Press, 2001: 6–7)

The need to gather intelligence quickly, in order to prevent future catastrophic terrorist attacks from occurring in the United States, was deemed to be so important to the Bush Administration that it rendered old laws like the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War obsolete (Gonzales, 2002). On 7 February 2002, Bush (2002) signed a memorandum stating that the Geneva Convention did not apply to the conflict with al Qaeda, ushering in the potential for prisoner abuse.

In March 2002, the CIA captured their first 'high value detainee', Abu Zubaydah, the purported logistics chief for al Qaeda.[2] The CIA knew that members of al Qaeda had been primed to resist the pressure of interrogations and thus, in order to obtain information from the detainees the CIA needed a way to overcome the resistance training (CIA Inspector General, 2004). The CIA had avoided interrogations for many years and as a result, did not have in-house experience to rely on (CIA Inspector General, 2004). Rather than seeking advice from experienced interrogators in the military, the CIA turned to two private contractors who were former Air Force psychologists, John 'Bruce' Jessen and James Mitchell, for direction (CIA Inspector General, 2004; Democracy Now, 2009; Eban, 2007; Mayer, 2009; US Senate, 2008).[3]

Mitchell and Jessen suggested to the CIA that the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) techniques employed by the services to train military personnel to resist torture and other extreme forms of abuse, such as isolation, sleep deprivation, walling, and slaps, could be reverse engineered to get detainees to talk (Eban, 2007; Goetz and Sandberg, 2009; Shane, 2009). While Mitchell and Jessen had no experience in interrogation and no evidence that harsh tactics would elicit truthful confessions, they did provide the CIA with what it needed, the facade of scientific, psychological, and professional authorization that torture would work (Democracy Now, 2009; Eban, 2007; Goetz and Sandberg, 2009; US Senate, 2008). Mitchell and Jessen reportedly oversaw the rough interrogation of Abu Zubaydah at a black site in Thailand which culminated in

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waterboarding (CBS News, 2010; Goldman and Apuzzo, 2010; Soufan, 2009). In order to provide a broader context to the controversy over 'enhanced interrogation techniques', the next section discusses existing literatures on prior attempts to normalize extreme or grotesque actions, drawing explicitly on organizational and historical writings on the Nazi Holocaust and the US involvement in the Vietnam War.

Normalizing atrocities

Clegg (2006) notes that *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Bauman, 1989) is a work of great organizational significance, in that it documents how the Nazi Holocaust was rendered feasible through the technological and organizational achievements of modern industrial, bureaucratic society. The Holocaust demonstrated that the institutions and thought systems of modernity could produce mass destruction as effectively as material abundance (Bauman, 1989). The systematic genocide of millions of people became doable once it was '… designed, monitored and supervised by "ordinary" administrative and economic sections' (Bauman, 1989: 14), in that it could be accomplished by relying on processes that were second nature to bureaucrats and therefore, would be minimally contested (Bauman, 1989). The Holocaust was achievable not because it avoided a clash with the social norms and institutions of modernity, but because it embedded itself in the modern traditions and apparatuses that felt customary to people (Bauman, 1989).

The Nazis replaced the rage of the mob needed for more primitive forms of mass annihilation with routines that are ubiquitous to any bureaucratic environment (Bauman, 1989; Brants, 2007). Bureaucracies derive their efficiency through ensuring that moral considerations of the end do not interfere with an individual's work by meticulously dividing labor into discreet assignments and coordinating the autonomous yet complementary acts (Bauman, 1989; Traverso, 2003). Thus, the mass murder of the Jewish people was accomplished not by arousing passions, but by engaging in mundane administrative duties such as making telephone calls, drawing up blue prints, and composing memoranda (Bauman, 1989; Traverso, 2003). Given that the genocide of the Jewish people was accomplished through ordinary office routines, even convicted war criminals such as Franz Stangl, Commandant of Treblinka, one of the Nazis' extermination camps, could claim that his work was purely administrative and therefore, he was guilty of no crime (Sereny, 1974). Hence, Arendt (1964) concluded that '… this new type of criminal … commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or feel that he is doing wrong' (p. 276).

Once genocide became just a workaday activity that could be managed through routinized jobs, the Jewish people lost their identity as human beings and became an object of bureaucratic management (Bauman, 1989; Sereny, 1974; Zimbardo, 2007). They were things that needed to be transported, sorted, used for slave labor, or disposed off as efficiently as possible (Funnell, 1998). By dehumanizing the Jewish people, the thought system of instrumental rationality made the Final Solution immanently reasonable, in that it was the most cost-effective way of disposing of undesirable items (Bauman, 1989).

Finally, rather than undermining the law, the Nazis utilized it as a means for legitimating genocide and gaining credibility with the population. Statutes were enacted, regulations drafted, and judicial opinions were crafted to give the Nazis' horrendous policies the appearance of respectability and provide the public with a sense of continuity with traditions of the past (Muller, 1991). Thus, during Adolf Eichmann's war crime trial in Jerusalem, he argued that he only committed a crime in retrospect because under the Third Reich, Hitler's orders bore the full weight of the law, and he was a law abiding citizen (Arendt, 1964).

While the evidence presented in this article supports Bauman's (1989) thesis that bureaucratization, routinization, and instrumental rationality are powerful mechanisms for normalizing

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atrocities, it should be noted that Bauman (1989) is contested. Critics argue, for instance, that Bauman (1989) underestimated the degree to which many murders were committed through hot violence, exaggerated the efficiency of bureaucratic killing, ignored the resistance of the victims, and downplayed the role of racist ideology in instigating murder (Clegg, 2006; Freeman, 1995; Stokes and Gabriel, 2010; Vetlesen, 2005). Nonetheless, such large scale systematic killing could not have occurred without organization, bureaucracy, logistics, and management (Stokes and Gabriel, 2010). Furthermore, organizational practices have been used by other genocidal regimes, such as the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, to normalize their barbarity (Pina e Cunha et al., 2010).

The Vietnam War also illustrated mechanisms that can be employed to normalize atrocities. While many war crimes were committed during the war, the war managers in Washington, DC insulated themselves from the barbarity by viewing the war through the physical and psychological distancing lens of statistics (Caputo, 1977; Gibson, 1986; Turse, 2013). Every aspect of the war that could be quantified was (Edwards, 1996; Gibson, 1986). This led to the war managers imposing an instrumentally rational production model of warfare on the conflict, in which it was assumed that the desired output could be attained through the proper management of inputs (Chwastiak, 2006; Gibson, 1986). Thus, napalm, agent orange, excessive bombing campaigns, and indiscriminate shootings simply became techniques for defeating the communists in Vietnam, and the dead, tortured, and abused Vietnamese were mere statistical indexes for measuring the productivity of the war (Chwastiak, 2006; Gibson, 1986).

Perhaps the most infamous statistic during the Vietnam War was the body count. Vietnam was a war of attrition, with the objective to kill the Viet Cong, the term used by the United States for communist Vietnamese, faster than they could be reproduced (Edwards, 1996; Gibson, 1986; McNamara, 1996). The pressure on soldiers to produce dead enemy corpses was so intense that it led to the routine violation of the rules of engagement or regulations covering prisoners of war, as well as the systematic slaughter of Vietnamese noncombatants (Caputo, 1977; Citizens Commission of Inquiry, 1972; Gibson, 1986).

The veterans blamed the indiscriminate killing on the indoctrination received during basic training. Explicit racism permeated all aspects of their training and was the means by which any empathy for the Vietnamese was extinguished. For instance, the people of Vietnam were never referred to as Vietnamese, but rather as 'dinks' or 'gooks' (Citizens Commission of Inquiry, 1972; Turse, 2013). The 'mere-gook rule' made it possible for young men who were perfect gentlemen at home to kill, abuse, and torture all Vietnamese, including women, children, and the elderly, without remorse (Turse, 2013). While the annihilation of the Vietnamese people was the result, only one incident of the United States' indiscriminate murder received significant attention and that was the massacre at My Lai, in which the Americal Division's Charlie Company systematically slaughtered more than 500 unarmed civilians (Turse, 2013: 3).

While the US government would portray My Lai as '… an aberration on the part of a junior officer and the small group of men he commanded' (Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 1972: xiii), the real anomaly was that the government did not succeed in covering up the crime (Hersh, 1970; Turse, 2013; Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 1972). During the Vietnam War, the US government stalled investigations of war crimes, intimidated witnesses, and obstructed courts martial in order to keep the public in the dark regarding the true nature of the war (Turse, 2013).

Three decades later, the war managers in Washington, DC would become more sophisticated. While still employing tactics of withholding incriminating information, Bush (2006) did admit that the CIA used an 'alternative set of procedures' to question terrorists in his 6 September 2006 speech. He then managed the impact of this revelation by stating that the 'alternative set of procedures' were reputable because they were 'within our laws', conducted by 'experts' in a

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'professional manner', were 'safe', and 'necessary' (Bush, 2006). The remainder of the article shows that the Bush Administration could make such a bold admission because they believed the controversy could be managed by making torture appear to be normal work.

'Enhanced interrogation techniques' versus torture

According to Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), dirty work consists of tasks that are physically, socially, or morally tainted and cause people to have a visceral repugnance to the job. Based on this definition, one could definitely define torture as dirty work. Dirty work is socially constructed, and hence, the boundaries between clean and taint are frequently contested and fluid, and this indeterminacy can be used to ideologically remove the stain from a disputed occupation (Grandy and Mavin, 2012; Simpson et al., 2012).

Members of the Bush Administration had significant interest in ideologically constructing 'enhanced interrogation techniques' as not torture. A discourse of American exceptionalism permeated the War on Terror and would have been hard to sustain if the United States appeared as rogue as its enemies (Esch, 2010; Szpunar, 2013). Thus, to differentiate 'enhanced interrogation techniques' from torture, the Bush Administration attributed benign intent to the techniques. The purpose of using 'enhanced interrogation techniques' was not to inflict severe pain, but rather, just discomfort. For instance, the intention of the facial slap was 'to induce shock, surprise and/or humiliation', wall standing was 'used to induce muscle fatigue', stress positions were 'designed to produce the physical discomfort associated with muscle fatigue', and sleep deprivation was used 'to reduce the individual's ability to think on his feet' (Bybee, 2002b: 2–3).

Given that most of us lose sleep now and then, or have had jobs where we stand for prolonged periods of time, or have experienced shameful moments, forcing terrorists to experience a little fatigue, embarrassment, or disorientation could not be torture (Malinowski, 2005). Rumsfeld epitomized how innocuous these techniques appeared to the Bush Administration when he scribbled, 'However, I stand for 8-10 hours a day. Why is standing limited to 4 hours?' (Rumsfeld, 2002), on the action memo in which he authorized the use of 'counter-resistance techniques' at Guantanamo.

In addition, in a 60 Minutes Overtime interview with Leslie Stahl and Jose Rodriguez, the former head of the CIA's Clandestine Services, Rodriguez compared the muscle fatigue from the 'stress positions' to the fatigue one feels from working out in the gym (CBS News, 2012), and when it came to sleep deprivation, the exchange between Rodriguez and Stahl was as follows:

Jose Rodriguez:	Sleep deprivation works. I'm sure, Lesley, with all the traveling that you do, that you have suffered from jet lag. And you know, when you don't get a good night's sleep for two, three days, it's very hard. (p. 5)
Lesley Stahl:	Now, you don't really mean to suggest that it's like jet lag. I mean, you make it sound like it's benign when you say stuff like that. (pp. 5–6)

In a memo written by Steven Bradbury (2005a), head of the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC), extreme and outrageous behavior that the courts had ruled as torture were listed as follows:

> … severe beatings to the genitals, head, and other parts of the body with metal pipes and various other items; removal of teeth with pliers; kicking in the face and ribs; breaking of bones and ribs and dislocation of fingers; cutting a figure into the victim's forehead; hanging the victim and beating him; extreme limitations of food and water; and subjection to games of 'Russian roulette'. (p. 14)

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In comparison to such atrocities, Rodriguez probably felt justified in trivializing the CIA's 'enhanced interrogation techniques' by stating, 'We made some al Qaeda terrorists with American blood on their hands uncomfortable for a few days' (CBS News, 2012: 2).

The Bush Administration's view that what the CIA was doing was insignificant in comparison to countries that 'really' torture was also illustrated in an exchange that occurred in 2003 between Holly Burkhalter, director of Physicians for Human Rights, and William Haynes, the General Counsel of the Department of Defense. According to Burkhalter,

> Haynes came in mad—he really looked angry. He started the meeting by saying, 'We don't torture' and then lectured us—'Those of you in human rights community who suggest that what the United States does to detainees is torture are trivializing the meaning of torture'. (Quoted in Hersh, 2004: 18–19)

Hence, the Bush Administration attempted to make torture appear to be normal work by removing the taint from 'enhanced interrogation techniques'. While rogue nations do horrendous things like remove teeth with pliers, the United States just made detainees uncomfortable.

Making torture legal

Analogous to other regimes that used the law to legitimate atrocities, the Bush Administration went to great lengths to make torture legal, and therefore, normal. From a practical perspective, the CIA had learned through past scandals to get everything in writing, preferably with a presidential signature. Hence, before the CIA would engage in what amounted to torture, the CIA sought legal clearance to cover its tracks (CBS News, 2012; Goldsmith, 2007; Mayer, 2009).

The CIA's Office of General Counsel determined that the United Nation's Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), which the United States ratified in 1994 and incorporated it into a variety of domestic laws, was the controlling legal constraint on interrogations of detainees outside the United States (CIA Inspector General, 2004). In order to make torture legal and provide the CIA with a 'golden shield' against prosecution, the White House had to demonstrate the irrelevance of the CAT to the CIA's 'enhanced interrogation program'.

The OLC provides authoritative legal advice to the President and all executive branch agencies. According to Goldsmith (2007), who headed the OLC from October 2003 to July 2004, the OLC has '… one of the most momentous and dangerous powers in the government: the power to dispense get-out-of-jail-free cards' (p. 97). For instance, if the OLC says that a practice like waterboarding is legal, it becomes almost impossible to prosecute the perpetrators (Goldsmith, 2007).

In an OLC memo written by John Yoo, the Deputy Assistant US Attorney General of the OLC, and signed by Jay Bybee, head of the OLC, the OLC defined the conditions under which an act would be considered torture according to the CAT in such a way that it would be impossible to indict the CIA agents responsible for conducting 'enhanced interrogation techniques' (Mayer, 2009; Siems, 2011). First, the Bybee (2002a) memo asserted that it had to be the 'specific intent' of the interrogator to cause harm for an act to be considered torture (p. 3). Second, the pain or suffering inflicted on the detainee had to be 'severe' (Bybee, 2002a: 5). Given that the term 'severe' was not defined in the CAT, the Bybee (2002a) memo sought to clarify it. Specifically,

> These statutes suggest that 'severe pain' … must rise to a similarly high level—the level that would ordinarily be associated with a sufficiently serious physical condition or injury such as death, organ failure, or serious impairment of body functions—in order to constitute torture. (p. 6)

Finally, the Bybee (2002a: 31) memo argued that the President, as Commander-in-Chief, had the constitutional authority to order interrogations. If any of the provisions of the CAT interfered

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with the President's ability to detain and interrogate enemy combatants then the treaty would be unconstitutional.

While the CIA sought legal clearance to cover its tracks, from a strategic perspective, the Bush Administration had to make 'enhanced interrogation techniques' legal to give the impression that they were normal. For as Bush (2006) would state, 'America is a nation of law' (p. 3). If 'enhanced interrogation techniques' were legal, then they were validated as appropriate behavior by a formal structure of power that is publicly respected. Over and over again the Bush Administration would justify the integrity of their actions by making reference to the legality of 'enhanced interrogation techniques'. For instance, in Bush's 6 September 2006 speech, Bush (2006) stated, in reference to the 'alternative set of procedures' used by the CIA to question terrorists,

> These procedures were designed to be safe, to comply with our laws, our Constitution, and our treaty obligations. The Department of Justice reviewed the authorized methods extensively and determined them to be lawful. I cannot describe the specific methods used … But I can say the procedures were tough, and they were safe, and lawful, and necessary. (p. 2)

Similarly, the CIA would use the legality of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' to position their acts as within the norms of reputable behavior. In a memo entitled, The High Value Terrorist Detainee Program, the CIA (2006) stated,

> … The CIA designed a new interrogation program that would be safe, effective, and legal. (p. 1)

> The CIA sought and obtained legal guidance from the Department of Justice that none of the new procedures violated the US statutes prohibiting torture. (p. 1)

> Specific senior CIA officers … must approve, prior to use, each and every one of the lawful interrogation procedures to be used. (p. 3)

Furthermore, by elevating the law to the determining factor of whether 'enhanced interrogation techniques' were torture or not, Bush (2006) could argue that the CIA agents responsible for capturing and questioning terrorists should not be put at risk of prosecution, 'simply for doing their jobs in a thorough and professional way' (p. 5). In addition, by making torture legal, alternative discourses that could have interfered with the normalization were rendered less effective. While several in the Judge Advocate General's Corps would object to the use of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' by the military based on morality, American values, and human rights policies, such critiques were viewed as inconsequential (US Senate, 2008).

Nonetheless, the Bybee (2002a) memo was highly contested, even within the Bush Administration. For instance, Goldsmith (2007), who found the opinion to be '… legally flawed, tendentious in substance and tone, and overbroad …', withdrew this opinion as his last act as head of the OLC (p. 151). However, given that the legitimacy of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' depended upon their legality, the Bush Administration simply found an individual who was more compliant to their needs to head the OLC, Steven Bradbury (Mayer, 2009). Bradbury (Bradbury, 2005a, 2005b) restored normalcy to the techniques by again making them legal.

Abstract discourse

As noted above, in order for torture to be legal, the pain inflicted on the detainee could not be 'severe'. To exclude this possibility, the OLC provided very specific instructions on how the

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techniques should be applied. For instance, the Bybee (2002b) memo describes the administration of the facial slap as follows:

> With the facial slap or insult slap, the interrogator slaps the individual's face with fingers slightly spread. The hand makes contact with the area directly between the tip of the individual's chin and the bottom of the corresponding earlobe. The interrogator invades the individual's personal space. The goal of the facial slap is not to inflict physical pain that is severe or lasting. Instead, the purpose of the facial slap is to induce shock, surprise, and/or humiliation. (p. 2)

The discourse in the memo is sanitized, antiseptic, devoid of human agency. It assumes the facial slap will be administered by an automaton who will follow orders precisely. Yet, it is well known that pinpoint applications of permissible minor abuse are not sustainable. It is impossible to manage coercive interrogations in such a way that they do not degrade to torture (Evans, 2007; Pokempner, 2005; Zimbardo, 2007).

For instance, according to interviews of 14 'high value detainees' conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross, this harmless facial slap translated into 'Beating and Kicking' in practice (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2007: 13). As one 'high value detainee' reported,

> In Kabul the treatment got worse. I was punched and slapped in the face and on the back to the extent that I was bleeding. While having a rope around my neck and being tied to a pillar my head was banged against the pillar repeatedly. (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2007: 13)

Yet, even after the International Committee of the Red Cross (2007) provided empirical proof that the techniques were not implemented in the sanitized way envisioned in the memos, in a 2007 OLC memo authorizing the CIA to employ six 'enhanced interrogation techniques', an abdominal slap was described as follows:

> The 'abdominal slap' involves the interrogator's striking the abdomen of the detainee with the back of his open hand. The interrogator must have no rings or other jewelry on his hand or wrist. The interrogator is positioned directly in front of the detainee, no more than 18 inches from the detainee. With his fingers held tightly together and fully extended, and with his palm toward his own body, using his elbow as a fixed pivot point, the interrogator slaps the detainee in the detainee's abdomen. The interrogator may not use a fist, and the slap must be delivered above the navel and below the sternum. (Bradbury, 2007: 10)

By using a discourse devoid of human agency to describe the techniques, the Bush Administration could present 'enhanced interrogation techniques' as 'tough' but 'safe' (Bush, 2006: 2), because there was ostensibly no chance of human shortcomings interfering with the execution. Given that the memos made severe pain rhetorically impossible, 'enhanced interrogation techniques' could be positioned as legal and therefore, normal.

Safety controls

In order to ensure that torture remained legal, in that 'severe' pain was not inflicted on the detainees, multiple safety controls were also built into the CIA's rendition and interrogation program. For instance, all interrogations in which 'enhanced techniques' were used had to be observed by non-participants 'to ensure the procedures are applied appropriately and safely' (CIA, 2006: 3). Furthermore, medical professionals took part in all aspects of the CIA's rendition and interrogation program (CIA, 2004b; Horton, 2010; Physicians for Human Rights, 2010).

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According to the CIA (2004b), physicians were present during torture to ensure that no harm was done. The CIA's Office of Medical Services (OMS) Guidelines on Medical and Psychological Support to Detainee Rendition, Interrogation, and Detention (henceforth referred to as the CIA's OMS Guidelines) stated, 'All medical officers remain under the professional obligation to do no harm … [redacted] … Medical officers must remain cognizant at all times of their obligation to prevent "severe physical or mental pain or suffering"' (CIA, 2004b: 9).

New detainees were given a thorough medical assessment upon arrival at the detention site with subsequent rechecks performed on a regular basis (CIA, 2004b). According to the OLC, 'The purpose of these evaluations is to ensure the detainee's safety at all times and to protect him from physical or mental harm' (Bradbury, 2007: 6). Supposedly, if a detainee experienced contraindications, the 'enhanced interrogation techniques' would stop (CIA, 2004a).

In addition, the CIA set very specific standards for such things as fluid and caloric intake, noise levels, and water temperatures. For example, a detainee's fluid requirement was set at '35ml/kg/day', and their energy requirement was set at '900 + 10x weight in kilograms for basal Kcal requirement; multiply by 1.2 for sedentary activity level, 1.4 for moderate activity level' (CIA, 2004b: 10). Making sure these standards were complied with put an impartial distance between the doctor and the detainee. The detainee just needed to be observed for fluid and caloric intake, water temperature when being doused, and sound levels. In other words, the detainee was a thing that had precise requirements to be maintained, not a human being with a huge range of needs and emotions. Reducing the detainee to a thing ensured the doctors could perform their duties efficiently and effectively in that dehumanization squelches moral inhibitions against committing atrocities toward others (Bauman, 1989).

Safety controls are used in other dangerous or intense occupations such as construction, fire fighting, policing, and health care. The US Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) establishes norms that employers must follow to protect employees from dangers, such as the amount of hazardous chemicals a worker can be exposed to or training requirements for dangerous jobs (www.osha.gov/workers.html). Thus, imposing safety controls on the CIA's rendition and interrogation program not only made it legal, but also made it appear normal in that is was just another occupation with inherent dangers that had to be minimized.

Production process

As noted previously, the thought system of instrumental rationality allowed the Vietnam War managers to normalize the indiscriminate killing and torture of Vietnamese civilians by viewing war as a production process, and death as a desirable output. Similarly, the Bush Administration normalized torture by seeing an instrumentally rational relationship between 'enhanced interrogation techniques' and the result desired, intelligence. The CIA (2004a) presented the 'enhanced interrogation' program as a mundane, methodical process for producing a 'high value detainee' (HVD) that could be persuaded 'to provide threat information and terrorist intelligence in a timely manner' (p. 1). The Background Paper on CIA's Combined Use of Interrogation Techniques stated,

> Effective interrogation is based on the concept of using both physical and psychological pressures in a comprehensive, systematic, and cumulative manner to influence HVD behavior, to overcome a detainee's resistance posture. The goal of interrogation is to create a state of learned helplessness and dependence conducive to the collection of intelligence in a predictable, reliable, and sustainable manner. (CIA, 2004a: 1)

This statement implies that the CIA perceived 'enhanced interrogation techniques' to be a proven method for producing results. The interrogators were just applying a preordained set of

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procedures in a methodical fashion, much as one follows instructions to manufacture plastic tubing at a factory, with the outcome being 'intelligence production' (CIA, 2004a: 18). Presenting 'enhanced interrogation techniques' as a routine method for producing intelligence made them appear as normal and benign as a college professor coming up with a unique system of rewards and punishments to teach students differential equations.

The CIA was able to conflate torture with production by dehumanizing the HVD. An HVD was reduced to a particular attribute he contained, a 'resistance posture' (CIA, 2004a: 1). A 'resistance posture' was unique to the detainee, measurable, and was responsible for the treatment the detainee received (CIA, 2004a). The detainee's 'resistance posture' was assessed during the initial interview. If a detainee's 'resistance posture' was low and they provided the CIA with information on actionable threats or the location of other high value targets, then the CIA would continue with the neutral approach to interrogation (CIA, 2004a: 3). However, if the detainee did not meet this 'very high' standard, then a detailed interrogation plan was submitted to CIA headquarters for approval and the detainee would move to 'the next phase' (Bradbury, 2005a: 4–5). During interrogation sessions in which 'enhanced techniques' were used, the interrogators would continuously 'measure the HVD's resistance posture and apply a negative consequence to the HVD's resistance efforts' (CIA, 2004a: 10). It was the HVD's resistance posture that determined whether the sessions lasted 30 minutes or several hours (CIA, 2004a). 'Enhanced interrogation techniques' would continue until this 'resistance posture' was overcome.

Thus, it was the 'resistance posture', not the detainee, that the interrogators had to work on. Not only did the reduction of the detainee to a 'resistance posture' allow the CIA to normalize torture by conflating it with production, it also allowed the CIA to shift the blame for 'enhanced interrogation techniques' to the detainee. The detainee's 'resistance posture' caused the CIA to methodically slap, hold, wall, water douse, stress, and so on the supposed al Qaeda agent. By blaming the victim, the CIA was not responsible for their actions.

Routines

Similar to the Nazi Holocaust, in which genocide was accomplished and made to blend into everyday society by organizing routines, the Bush Administration attempted to give the appearance of normality to torture by routinizing it. Standard procedures governed all aspects of the CIA's rendition and interrogation program, from the takeout of the prisoner, to the transfer of the detainee from one black site to another, to the detention and interrogation process, itself (CIA, 2004a; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2007; Mayer, 2009). For instance, according to Mayer (2009),

> A former member of a CIA transport team described the 'takeout' of prisoners as a carefully choreographed twenty-minute routine, during which a suspect was hog-tied, stripped naked, photographed, hooded, sedated with anal suppositories, placed in diapers, and transported by plane to a secret location. (p. 272)

Furthermore, once a 'high value detainee' was turned over to the CIA 'a predictable set of events occur' (CIA, 2004a: 2). These events included rendition, reception at the black site, and interrogation. During the rendition phase, a medical exam was performed on the detainee prior to the flight to the Black Site. During the flight, the detainee was shackled and deprived of sight and sound through the use of blindfolds, earmuffs, and hoods. Upon arrival at the Black Site, the detainee was subjected to administrative procedures and a medical assessment. The detainee's head and face were then shaved and a series of nude photographs were taken to document the detainee's physical condition. This was followed by interviews with a medical officer and a psychologist (CIA, 2004a).

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Interrogation techniques followed and were broken down into three categories: Conditioning, Corrective, and Coercive. Conditioning techniques included nudity, sleep deprivation, and dietary manipulation. Corrective techniques encompassed the insult slap, abdominal slap, facial hold, and attention grasp. Finally, coercive techniques comprised walling, water dousing, stress positions, wall standing, and cramped confinement (CIA, 2004a).

Finally, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (2007), 'The transfer procedure was fairly standardized in most cases' (p. 6) with a typical transfer described as follows:

> The detainee would be photographed, both clothed and naked prior to and again after transfer. A body cavity check (rectal examination) would be carried out and some detainees alleged that a suppository … was also administered at that moment. The detainee would be made to wear a diaper and dressed in a tracksuit. Earphones would be placed over his ears … The detainee would be shackled by hands and feet and transported to the airport … (p. 6)

Organizational routines have a way of psychically distancing the perpetrator of an act from the emotional consequences, diminishing the possibility that individual moral inhibitions will get in the way (Bauman, 1989). Furthermore, one does not normally associate the word routine with criminal acts. If kidnapping and torture could be as routinized as packing boxes on a truck, how could 'extraordinary rendition' or 'enhanced interrogation techniques' be out of the ordinary?

Bureaucratization

Similar to the Nazis, who were able to make systematic genocide look ordinary by accomplishing it through the normal administrative functions of government, the Bush Administration bureaucratized torture to such an extent that the CIA's rendition and interrogation program appeared to be as mundane as any other federal program. As one former CIA officer stated, 'Brutalization became bureaucratized' (quoted in Mayer, 2009: 271).

First, the torture program was subject to strict administrative controls. For instance, the CIA required agents to submit a written interrogation plan to Headquarters before 'enhanced interrogation techniques' could be employed (Bradbury, 2007: 5). The plan had to be personally reviewed and approved by the Director of the CIA (Bradbury, 2007). The plan authorization lasted for 30 days. If the CIA anticipated the need to use 'enhanced interrogation techniques' beyond the 30-day approval period, a new plan had to be submitted for evaluation and ratification (CIA, 2004a). In addition, for each 'high value detainee' interrogated, a report stating the nature and duration of each technique used, as well as the identities of those present, had to be sent to CIA Headquarters (Tenet, 2003b). Documentation requirements applied to the doctors participating in 'enhanced interrogation techniques' as well. With respect to the waterboard, the CIA's OMS Guidelines stated,

> In order to best inform future medical judgements and recommendations, it is important that every application of the waterboard be thoroughly documented: how long each application (and the entire procedure) lasted, how much water was used in the process (realizing that much splashes off), how exactly the water was applied, if a seal was achieved, if the naso- or oropharynx was filled, what sort of volume was expelled, how long was the break between applications, and how the subject looked between each treatment. (CIA, 2004b: 17)

Furthermore, the behavior of the officers responsible for interrogations and for detention facilities was not left to chance. The CIA required these officers to sign a document acknowledging that they had read, understood, and would comply with the guidelines established by the CIA for these

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responsibilities (Tenet, 2003a, 2003b). For example, the 'Guidelines on Interrogations Conducted Pursuant to the [redacted]' set forth the interrogation techniques that were permissible, the need for medical and psychological personnel to be present during interrogation, personnel requirements for interrogators, the approvals necessary, and record keeping stipulations (Tenet, 2003b). Hence, similar to the Nazi Holocaust in which genocide was normalized by embedding it in ordinary administrative duties, by forcing the CIA's rendition and interrogation program to conform to the day to day minutia of bureaucratic accountability, it appeared as humdrum as any other federal program.

Second, the CIA's interrogation program was engulfed in an aura of professionalism. According to the CIA (2006), 'Multiple safeguards have been built into the program to assure its professionalism' (p. 2). First, the CIA (2006) vetted prospective interrogators 'for demonstrated professional judgement and maturity' (p. 2). The average age of officers responsible for interrogating detainees was 43 (CIA, 2006: 2). Plus, the interrogators were psychologically screened to minimize the risk that they would misuse the techniques (Bradbury, 2007: 7). Second, interrogators had to be 'certified' before they could question detainees (Bradbury, 2007: 7). The certification included 250 hours of training in the techniques and their limits over a 4-week period of time, plus an apprenticeship with an experienced interrogator (Bradbury, 2007: 7). As the OLC stated, 'We understand from you [the CIA] that these procedures ensure that all interrogators understand the design and purpose of the interrogation techniques and that they will apply the techniques in accordance with their authorized and intended use' (Bradbury, 2007: 7).

In conflating the CIA agents who employed 'enhanced interrogation techniques' with certified professionals, torture was rendered normal. Certified professionals appear in such careers as accounting, teaching, nursing, and so on and command a certain degree of respect in society. The United States would never certify a professional in an egregious occupation like torturer. Hence, 'enhanced interrogation techniques' could not be abhorrent.

Conclusion

This article examined an extreme context, torture, to demonstrate that one way in which governments can attempt to minimize political and legal interference with highly controversial policies is by making the work involved in implementing the plans look normal. While the incessant demands of international capitalism are legitimating excessive requirements on employees, such as increased hours and intensity of work (McCann et al., 2008), for the Bush Administration, the exceptional threat of terrorism justified a descent into torture. However, given a discourse of American exceptionalism permeated the War on Terror, 'enhanced interrogation techniques' had to be differentiated from torture, lest America look as rogue as its enemies. The Bush Administration used the indeterminacy between clean and dirty work to ideologically distinguish 'enhanced interrogation techniques' from torture, in claiming that 'enhanced interrogation techniques' only created discomfort, not pain.

The Bush Administration also employed a formal structure of power that is publicly respected, the law, to make 'enhanced interrogation techniques' appear to be legitimate. Torture was made legal, and therefore, normal, by ensuring that 'severe' pain would not be inflicted on the detainee by removing human agency and installing safety controls over the procedures. Furthermore, the Bush Administration transformed torture into normal work by embedding it in mundane organizational processes and rationalities that permeate the federal government. Torture was rendered as tedious and predictable as a manufacturing process in which an object, a 'resistance posture', was transformed into something useful. In routinizing torture, mindful thought was removed from the

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activity and the criminal element was disguised. Finally, by bureaucratizing torture, it looked as ordinary as any other federal program.

Thus, similar to Bauman (1989), this research demonstrated that organizational processes and rationalities can be used to produce abundant evil as well as good. Commonplace, taken for granted aspects of organizations can coordinate the delivery of food to starving children, or the transportation of people to their death, or kidnapping and torture. Given that the bureaucratic routines are similar in each case, the work looks unexceptional even though the purposes vary profoundly. Hence, while previous research demonstrated that extreme contexts can reveal conditions of organizations that remain hidden in conventional settings, this article showed that taken for granted aspects of organizations can mask the extreme nature of work and make it appear normal.

The boundaries between extreme and normal are always fluid and contested. While the Bush Administration would deny torturing anyone (Bradbury, 2005b; Bush, 2006), this claim was constantly disputed. For example, human rights organizations released reports condemning 'enhanced interrogation techniques' as torture (Amnesty International, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Open Society Justice Initiative, 2013; Physicians for Human Rights, 2008), lawsuits were filed against members of the Bush Administration for violating CAT and other international declarations against torture (American Civil Liberties Union, 2011; Center for Constitutional Rights, n.d.), and even insiders, such as Ali Soufan of the Federal Bureau of Investigations and John Kiriakou of the CIA, publicly denounced 'enhanced interrogation techniques' (Horton, 2013; Shane, 2013; Soufan, 2009).

Furthermore, evidence seems to suggest that some CIA agents employed harsh techniques that were not authorized, while others pushed the authorized methods beyond their legal limits (CIA Inspector General, 2004; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2007; Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2014). Thus, while the Bush Administration tried to contain the controversy by making the extreme work of torture look normal, the discourse did not colonize all of the dissenters and was not able to control the participants.

Finally, in 1989 the CIA, itself, informed the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (2014) that 'inhumane physical or psychological techniques are counter productive because they do not produce intelligence and will probably result in false answers' (p. 18). The criticism that 'enhanced interrogation techniques' 'are ineffective, slow and unreliable, and as a result harmful to our efforts to defeat al Qaeda' (Soufan, 2009: 1) was repeated frequently by experts who opposed torture (US Senate, 2008). Furthermore, in an article exposing the tactical costs of prisoner abuse, Rose (2008) noted,

> In researching this article, I spoke to numerous counterterrorist officials from agencies on both sides of the Atlantic. Their conclusion is unanimous: not only have coercive methods failed to generate significant and actionable intelligence, they have also caused the squandering of resources on a massive scale through false leads, chimerical plots, and unnecessary safety alerts … (p. 4)

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (2014) spent 4 years exhaustively researching the CIA's 'extraordinary rendition' and 'enhanced interrogation' program. The Committee found that, indeed, 'enhanced interrogation techniques' produced no intelligence or false information in several cases, that plots the CIA claimed to have disrupted as a result of using 'enhanced interrogation techniques' were infeasible or never operationalized, and that the CIA's management of the program complicated or impeded the national security missions of other Executive Branch agencies. Hence, not only was the use of 'enhanced interrogation techniques' morally questionable, it also resulted in practical failures as well. It would appear, therefore, that despite the best efforts of professionals, such as lawyers, physicians, psychologists, and politicians, the boundaries between

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'normal' and 'extreme', or even 'lawful' and 'criminal', often remain indistinct, contested, and deeply troublesome.

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Notes

1. While the torture memos used in this research were acquired from various sources, the following *New York Times* webpage provides a link to several of the documents used: http://www.nytimes.com/ref/international/24MEMO-GUIDE.html
2. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) classified detainees as either 'high value' or 'medium value', depending on the quality of intelligence they could provide regarding terrorist threats against the United States. Senior al Qaeda planners and operators were considered 'high value' detainees and, due to the sensitivity of the intelligence, were interrogated by CIA agents (CIA Inspector General, 2004: 3).
3. While it is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on the privatization of security, relying on private contractors allowed the CIA to focus on 'getting the job done' rather than 'doing the right thing' (Godfrey et al., 2014: 122).

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